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MEMOIRS OF MRS. BILLINGTON.

*(Continued from our last.)*

WE have already, in the preceding Number of this Work glanced, though but cursorily, at what appeared to us a probable event—viz, the decline and falling-off of the interest of the Opera of *Artaxerxes*, in which Mrs. *Billington* (in our opinion very injudiciously) made her appearance at both Theatres. The genius of the English character, we speak of the grand bulk of a British audience, is avowedly not calculated for serious Opera. The refinement, the airs and graces of the Italian School, may please and fascinate the *connoisseur*; but are infinitely above the comprehension of the majority. They constitute a kind of *bonne bouche*, which *John Bull* has no objection to partake of, by way of *dessert*; but on which he cannot make a *hearty meal*. His stomach requires more substantial fare; and soon palls at

the sickly *recitative*, which ill supplies the place of sprightly and ingenious *dialogue*.

For the above reasons, we were decidedly of opinion, from the first announcement of our heroine, in the part of *Mandane*, that the Managers had mistaken their true interest, and were acting on precarious and illusory principles. In a Biographical sketch of Mrs. *Billington*, accompanied with occasional critical remarks, as well on her professional character, as on the system adopted by the Managers, which we gave in a \* *Morning Paper*, on the day of her *debut* at Covent Garden Theatre, we peremptorily stated, what has since been verified by fact, that *Artaxerxes* would prove a *dead weight* to the exertion of talent, however great and exalted. We questioned the policy of the Managers in bringing out a Performer of such transcendant powers in a piece, which could only be relished, generally speaking, by the higher classes, and these, unquestionably, are not the main and permanent supporters of the Theatre. 'Tis to the *galleries* and the *Pit* that the Manager must principally look for profit and encouragement. Fashion may patronise;—but 'tis the solid cash acquired by the industrious, and expended by the middling and lower orders, that pays the enterprise, and keeps the machine in motion. Of this important truth, the Proprietors of our Theatres are fully aware, and hence—whilst they indulge their Performers with the *privilege* of Orders for the *Boxes*. and the *Two Shilling Gallery*, no (*Bones* as the Orders of Performers are technically called) convey the right of free-admission to the *Pit* and *Upper Gallery*.

The length of our *Theatrical Retrospect* compels us to postpone the remainder of this *Memoir*, together with our Report of *Artaxerxes*, till our next.

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\* See the *Oracle* of *Saturday*, the 3d. of the current month—the day, on which Mrs. BILLINGTON made her first appearance at Covent-Garden.

THEATRICAL RETROSPECT.

DRURY-LANE.

1801.

OCTOBER.

Thursday, 8. *Artaxerxes*, Dr. Arne—*The Old Maid*. A. Murphy.

Saturday, 10. *Artaxerxes*, Dr. Arne—*The Irish Widow*. O. Keefe.

Monday, 12. *George Barnwell*, G. Lillo.—*Blue-Beard*, G. Colman.

Tuesday, 13. *She Wou'd, and She Wou'd Not*, C. Cibber.—*Lo-doiska*, J. P. Kemble.

Wednesday, 14, *The Inconstant*, G. Farquhar—*Of Age To-morrow*.

The part of *Maria*, in *George Barnwell*; and *Rosara*, in *She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not*, by Mrs. Sontley, vice Miss Heard, who for private and domestic reasons has resigned her situation at Drury-lane. It is with unfeigned satisfaction we congratulate Mrs. Sontley on the evident improvement she has made in her profession, since her original *debut* at this Theatre, December 6, 1800. Both as *Maria* and *Rosara*, she evinced much genuine feeling, and has likewise, in a great measure, shaken off that stiffness of manner, which proved, a strong drawback on the merit of her performance. Yet, still there remains one object, which claims her most particular attention and sollicitude. We allude to her accent, which is too inveterately Irish for the nice ear of a London audience. This is a defect, which admits of correction, otherwise we should not have pointed it out—and, doubtless, her own good sense will convince her of the necessity of paying heed to our well meant suggestions.



With the exception of the Opera of *Artaxerxes*, Drury-lane presents this week little worthy of record. We proceed, therefore, to a review of the Performances at

## COVENT-GARDEN.

1801

OCTOBER.

*Thursday*, 8. Integrity, *From the German*—The Irish Mimic, O'Keefe.

*Friday*, 9. Integrity, *From the German*—Netley Abbey, Pearce;

*Monday*, 12. Hamlet, *Shakspeare*—Perouse;

*Tuesday*, 13. Artaxerxes, *Dr. Arne*—The Irishman in London, O'Keefe.

*Wednesday*, 14. The Dramatist, *J. Reynolds*—The Escapes:

The Covent Garden Bill of Fare this week presents a rich and ample field for critical animadversion. Two new dramas, and two new appearances—We take them in regular succession, commencing, as first in the order of rotation, with the new Play of

### INTEGRITY.

Of this Drama, which we understand is a translation from the prolific, but crude and hasty Muse of Kotzebue, it is the less incumbent upon us to enter into wide and comprehensive detail, as the short period of its existence (the Play being withdrawn after the *second* representation) must necessarily abrogate from its interest, and rank it on the list of dramatic abortions. Its equipment in an English dress has been generally, but erroneously ascribed to Mrs. INCHBALD, a lady, who acquired much and merited repute by her adoption of *Lover's Vows*—but which she wantonly threw away, by her indiscreet adoption of the *Wise Man of the East*. Since

Since that period, whatever German nonsense is *retailed* upon the English stage, without an avowed foster-parent, is, as a matter of course, foisted upon her. Justice, however, requires that we should rescue her from the obloquy of acting the part of *midwife* to Kotzebue, on the present occasion. This kind office, it seems, was performed abroad, by the obstetric hands of a certain *man-midwife* of no small celebrity, who some time since left this country on political grounds.

### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

<i>Herman,</i>	—	Mr. H. SIDDONS.
<i>Dunkleman,</i>	—	Mr. CORY.
* <i>Rosenwald,</i>	—	Mr. H. JOHNSTON.
<i>Wohlstein,</i>	—	Mr. MURRAY.
<i>Albert Voss, alias</i> <i>Sendheim,</i>	{	Mr. BRUNTON.
<i>Secretary to the Governor,</i>		Mr. WADDY.
<i>Servant,</i>		Mr. BLANCHARD.
<i>Mrs. Herman</i>	—	Miss CHAPMAN.
<i>Helen, (her daughter)</i>		Mrs. H. JOHNSTON.
<i>Julia Sendheim,</i>	—	Miss MURRAY.
<i>Flora,</i>	—	Mrs. MATTOCKS.

The scene is laid in the territory of some petty German Prince. *Herman* is a young advocate, of nice and strict honour, whose inflexible integrity gives title to the Piece.— Though in indigent circumstances, with a mother and sister dependent on his support, he cannot be prevailed upon to undertake

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\* On the second representation, the part of *Rosenwald*, in consequence of an accident, which was alledged to have befallen Mr. Johnston, but a few minutes previous to the drawing up of the curtain, was obliged to be *read* by Mr. Wilkinsons;

undertake any suit, which to him does not appear founded in justice. On the other hand, neither wealth nor power can deter him from espousing the cause of those, who have right on their side. Actuated by this benevolent principle, he volunteers the defence of *Wohlstein*, an honest veteran soldier, in a case of litigation between him and the Governor. *Wohlstein* gains his cause, through the assistance of *Herman*, who refuses to accept of any remuneration.

A mutual passion subsists between *Helen*, the sister of *Herman*, and *Albert*; but the fear of enhancing the difficulties, under which her mother and brother already labour, by her union with *Albert*, who is as poor as herself, determines her to make a sacrifice of her love to the interest of her family. *Rosenwald*, a man of considerable wealth and influence, pays his addresses to her, and introduces *Dunkleman*, as a client, to *Herman*. In their interview, *Herman* discovers the villainy of *Dunkleman*, who seeks to possess himself of another's right, and accordingly refuses to be concerned in his cause. This denial highly incenses *Dunkleman*, who, however, makes a second attempt, to prevail on *Herman* to alter his resolution. He is the holder of a bond, for a considerable sum, given by *Herman's* father, and makes no doubt, but this circumstance will soften *Herman* in his favour.

He re-urges his application, but in vain; and at the very moment, that he is preparing to depart, *Albert* enters the room, to take his final leave of *Helen*. The emotion, which *Dunkleman* betrays at the sight of *Albert*, excites a strong suspicion in *Herman*, that *Albert* is the identical person, whom *Dunkleman* is endeavouring to defraud and oppress. He prevents *Dunkleman* from leaving the room, confronts the parties together, and thus effects the important discovery, that *Albert*, is young *Sendheim*, *Dunkleman's* nephew, and rightful heir to the estate, which his uncle has by fraud possessed



fessed himself of. *Dunkleman* withdraws in a rage, vowing revenge against the advocate.

Through his interest with the Governor, *Dunkleman* procures the arrest both of *Albert* and *Herman*. Their confinement, however, is of short duration. *Julia*, who proves to be *Albert's* stepmother, procures their release. *Albert* is now recognised, as *Sendheim*—the villainy of *Dunkleman* is completely defeated—*Albert* espouses *Helen*, and *Julia* gives her hand to the young advocate *Herman*. All this we are given to understand by Pantomimic representation, which forms the entire substance of the fifth act.

From the under plot, we are informed, that *Herman* had long cherished a romantic passion for *Julia*, without even knowing her. He had, it seems, about three years ago, been instrumental in saving her life, which, connected with other circumstances, excited the jealousy of her husband, and led to a duel between him and *Herman*, in which the latter was wounded. *Herman* had never seen *Julia's* face, (the lady being veiled) but her figure and manner had made such a strong impression on him, that he painted her picture, which forms one of the principal ornaments of his room, *Julia* on being emancipated from the shackles of Hymen, meets *Herman*. To make trial of his virtue, she represents herself as a married woman, forced to elope from her husband, in consequence of cruel treatment, and claims the Advocate's protection. *Herman*, like a second *Joseph*, rejects her suit, and utters some very fine declamation against *Crim. Con.* which would come with no bad grace from the *pulpit*, or the moralising lips of *Lord Kenyon*. Finding him inflexible in virtue, *Julia* discovers herself in her real character, as a widow—and makes an offer of her hand, which *Herman* readily accepts. The *denouement* is brought about, by a species of enchantment, and the piece concludes with a *Fairy Tale* scene, in which a whole group of figures, of all  
sizes

sizes and ages, appear ranged together, in theatrical attitudes, like images in a statuary's shop—leaving the spectator at perfect liberty to form what conjecture he pleases, respecting the meaning and design of this grand exhibition of dumb show!

After this general outline of the fable of the New Play, we conceive it superfluous to enlarge on its prevailing character. It is only when the author launches into extravagance, that he stands exempt from the censure of inveterate dulness. The sole attempts, and those but slight ones, at sprightliness and humour, were in the part of *Flora* and the *Servant*, which were ably sustained by Mrs. Mattocks, and Mr. Blanchard. The latter performer evinces much improveable talent.

*Mrs. Harman, Ellen and Albert* are mere *water-gruel* characters, such as we meet with in the insipid chronicle of daily life. They of course afforded little scope for the exercise of professional talent. *Rosenwald* is much of the same complexion: he is a man of the world, who suddenly, from what cause and motive we are left to guess, turns *sentimentalist*, and beats up for proselytes. It is a character of that description, that whether *acted*, or *read*, makes little difference in the general effect. The part of *Wohlstein* discovers some occasional *traits* which appeal to the feelings, and to which Mr. Murray did complete justice. But these occasions are very rare and limited.

Miss Murray, as the widow *Sendheim*, supported a part the most remote that can possibly be conceived from her own state and character. But the strong interest of her manner and appearance effectually blinded all eyes to scenic incongruity, and charmed at the expence of judgment and propriety. Her *Julia* took the lead, beyond controversy, of all the female *Dramatis Personæ*.

MR.



MR. H. SIDDONS, and MR. CORY, being both first appearances at this theatre, are entitled to distinct and particular notice. We shall, therefore, conclude our remarks upon the New, and we may add, *defunct* Play of *Integrity*, with the insertion of the *Prologue* and *Epilogue*, which, in compliance with the earnest request of several of our readers, we mean to give regularly.

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PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY T. DIBDIN.

*Spoken by Mr. BRUNTON.*

Where Commerce hourly wafts a countless store,  
Of wealth from ev'ry clime and ev'ry shore,  
Here, where on Industry she loves to smile,  
And deck with many a gem her favour'd isle,  
Long may she reign—by Freedom check'd alone,  
Her Crown, *Success*—*Integrity* her Throne!  
Integrity, the British Merchant's guide,  
And ev'ry true-born child of Britain's pride!  
That ore from Virtue's mine, which names our Play;  
Meets with respect your critical assay:  
If sterling, we demand your warm applause—  
You must support, what best supports your laws:  
And they are prov'd by ev'ry cause you try  
To owe their being to *Integrity*.  
Well may such laws to Fame and Fortune raise,  
Whom e'er they honour with the meed of praise.  
And one of those, one by your judgment plac'd  
High on the rank by genuine talent grac'd;  
One, who so oft has charm'd your listening ears,  
While mimic sorrow “drown'd the House with tears.”  
Whose magic powers—but neediest 'twere to tell  
What your approving *hands* can speak so well.

She here entrusts, of Justice well-assur'd,  
 The Scion of a Plant by you matur'd.  
 He, trembling, begg'd I'd venture to request  
 You'd praise what pleases, and forgive the rest.  
 I, to encourage, told the frighten'd elf  
 "The blood of Douglas should protect itself!"  
 But he, in spite of ev'ry anxious fear,  
 Looks wisely for the best protection here"

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## EPILOGUE

WRITTEN BY T. DIBDIN:

*Spoken by Miss MURRAY, and Mrs. MATTOCKS, in the Characters of Julia and Flora.*

*Julia.* That the Stage is a Mirror, we all know for certain:

*Flora.* Yes, Ma'am, it is written so over the curtain.

*Julia.* What a charming large glass! 'tis no wonder the Graces  
 So often come here to behold their sweet faces.  
 It takes in all follies, copies ev'ry complexion,  
 And you'll all of you own, there's fine room for reflection,

To night, on its surface, with wonder you saw  
 An honest, plain-spoken young man of the law,  
 He refus'd a rich fee ———

*Flora.* ——— And a beautiful lass.

*Julia.* And as all this you only beheld in the glass,  
 We've come just to look, if, perchance, we can see  
 The person reflected—Sure, that can't be he?

*Flora.* That? No, Ma'am, he sits with his muscles so steady,  
 A body might swear, that he's married already.

*Julia.* That spruce man in black—

*Flora* ——— With

*Flora.* ——— With sharp nose and wide flare?  
 No—he'd refuse nothing that came to *his* share:  
 Stay, yonder—pray, Ma'am, will you just move your  
 fan?—

*Julia.* As I hope for a husband, you've found out the man!  
 By those features I'm sure, an ingenious youth,  
 Who vastly admires honour, candour and truth;  
 By those eyes, half cast down;—No! I'm wrong, I con-  
 fess,

*Flora.* La! Ma'am, he's admiring *himself* and his *dress*!

*Julia:* Well 'tis strange we can't find—yet the reason is plain:  
 To look but for *one* such an hero were vain;  
 Our glass reflects *many*, who virtue revere,  
 And virtue can never be *singular* here:  
 May its beams oft illumine the Mirror before you,  
 May its blessings diffuse their best influence o'er you.  
 While Folly abash'd, shall retire at the sight  
 Of the worth's that's reflected from *you* ev'ry night.

(Exit:)

*Flora:* So much for reflections—Ere I bid adieu,  
 I'll leave a most pleasing reflection for *you*:  
 'Tis that Plenty shall crown ev'ry year with increase,  
 While from War's dreadful toil our lov'd heroes shall  
 cease,  
 And receive their reward in the bosom of Peace:

(Exit,)

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MR. HENRY SIDDONS.

The prominent and principal point of attraction, attached to the New Play, was, unquestionably, the *debut* of this gentleman, who made his first appearance on the London boards, in the character of *Herman*, the young Advocate. Mr. Siddons is the eldest son of the celebrated tragic actress of that name, and inherits all the characteristics of the family. So inveterate, indeed, is the resemblance between



him and his uncle, the elder Kemble, that a stranger might at once trace and ascertain their consanguinity. Nor does this resemblance confine itself to person. As well in voice and manner, as in figure, he is the direct counterpart of Mr. Kemble, and presents us with an idea of what Mr. Kemble may be supposed to have been at his age. This affinity between the uncle and nephew, in respect to manner, has operated rather to the disadvantage of Mr. Siddons. Without making due allowance for physical likeness, many of our public critics have referred his similarity to a spirit of the most servile imitation, and regard him as a greater copyist, than on strict investigation, he really appears to be. That he has been trained and tutored in the Kemble school, and is strongly imbued with Kemblean lore, we pretend not to deny. The peculiarities of Mr. Kemble's acting are of such a nature, that the approximation to his manner can never be the result of accident. This we readily concede, and in this point of view we agree, that Mr. Siddons has formed himself upon the family model. But Nature herself is, in no small degree, accountable for the analogy which obtains between the uncle and the nephew. The features of both are of the same mould—the same saturnine complexion—the same gravity of look—the same solemnity of deportment—the same sepulchral tones constitute the characteristics of both. Thus formed alike, it must necessarily happen, that with qualifications exactly similar, Mr. Siddons, under the guidance of Kemblean discipline, would catch the manner and habits, likewise, of his relation, towards the accomplishment of which his physical characteristics operate as pre-disposing causes. Hence the same management of voice—hence the same artificial remedy of a bad organ—hence the frequent and protracted pause, which forms such a striking *trait* in Mr. Kemble's delivery—hence the over-charged emphasis, and impressive swell

on words of secondary, and even trifling import. Hence finally, the heaviness and gloom, which strongly leaven and pervade the acting of both.

But if we lose sight of these physical peculiarities, and attend sedulously to his general conception and personation of the character he represents, we shall discover in Mr. Siddons's performance, genuine emanation of mind, and proof of vigorous intellect. Where so close a resemblance obtains to the style and manner of an actor of matured talent and established repute, it is almost, nay we should say it is absolutely, impossible to divest the judgment of the warp it necessarily receives from comparison, which must, in cases like the present, ever operate to the disadvantage and disparagement of the new Candidate. What in fact, may be the effect of accident, of natural disposition, and good sense, will ever be placed to the score of laboured and servile imitation. His defects alone will be referred immediately to himself, whilst his beauties will be invidiously wrested from him, and given to another.

Perhaps Mr. Siddons was not the most happy in his choice of the character pitched upon for his *debut*. Independent of the momentous drawback, which a dull and unsuccessful piece must ever prove to the exertions of a new performer, who has *up-hill work* all the way, the character, in itself is *too much upon stilts*, if we may be allowed the phrase, and not sufficiently variegated in its coloring, to exhibit the performer to advantage. This naturally begets a monotony of manner, which soon palls upon the spectator, and makes no hold upon his feelings. Art then remains his only resource, and this is exactly the very worst predicament, in which a performer can possibly be placed.

But let us dismiss the part of *Herman*, and the New Play altogether, and proceed to a cursory review of Mr. Siddons, in the arduous character of *Hamlet*. Here the mind involuntarily



luntarily reverts to Mr. Kemble. 'Tis, indeed, impossible to counteract the association of ideas, which present themselves to the imagination at the very mention of this Play. But though, after the remarks we have already offered, it will naturally be expected, that Mr. Siddons, in his general outline, presented a close copy of his uncle, still we must do him the justice to observe (and it gives us unfeigned pleasure that we can thus report of him) that in many instances he departed from his model, and struck out new beauties of his own. His behaviour on the appearance of the *Ghost*, was novel, and infinitely more consonant to nature, than the manner we have been accustomed to witness. Instead of studying postures, at such an awful moment, and throwing himself into a fine theatrical attitude; he sinks into the arms of *Horatio* and *Marcellus*. This certainly conveys a truer expression of feeling, and justly claims the title of improvement.

We might point out various other situations, in which Mr. Siddons discovered genuine talent, would our limits permit. In the closet scene, in particular, his remonstrances with his mother evinced a greater share of filial piety, and duty, mingled with his abhorrence of the crime, with which he charges her, than Mr. Kemble infuses into his performance. It was a palpable and agonizing struggle between his duty to the *dead*, and what he owed to the *living*. Throughout the whole of this trying scene, he was pre-eminently successful.

As a future opportunity will doubtless present of more copiously analyzing his performance of this character, we shall reserve our farther remarks till the next representation of this Play.

MR. CORY.



## MR. CORY.

Exclusive of the *debut* of Mr. Siddons, the new Play of *Integrity*, (whatever may be its radical and inherent defects) has the merit of serving as the vehicle to the introduction of this Gentleman, on the Covent Garden boards. With Mr. Cory's professional abilities, the public are already, though but *partially*, acquainted by his prior performances at Drury-lane. 'Tis not without reason, that we say, "*but partially*"—for the systematic hostility he had to encounter at the latter Theatre, and the preconcerted manner, in which he was invidiously *thrown into the back ground*, afforded him but very few, and very circumscribed, opportunities of fair exertion.

In consequence of these restrictions, and the general unpleasant predicament in which he stood at Drury-lane, Mr. Cory long harboured a wish, and expressed that wish to many of his friends, (among others to the writer of this article) to relinquish his situation at that theatre. But being under an engagement for a term of years, he was not at liberty to follow his inclinations, and of course was compelled to make himself as easy under oppression, as he could. Thus circumstanced, at the close of the last season he received a notice of discharge. The notice, in itself, was nugatory and illegal, two years of Mr. Cory's engagement being unexpired. Mr. Cory, however, had no desire to contest the point; but eagerly availing himself of the favourable opportunity presented to him by managerial rashness and precipitancy, entered, within an hour or two after receipt of the aforesaid notice, into an article with Mr. Harris, at a rising salary, for five years.

At Covent Garden, Mr. Cory appears a very different man, from what he was wont to do at Drury-lane. His feelings no longer outraged, he breathes the air of assurance, and moves with free and unshackled energy. Mutual confidence

dence subsists between himself and his employers, and duty from an irksome task, converts into a pleasing office.

As the representative of *Dunkleman*, in which character Mr. Cory made his *debut* on the Covent Garden boards, he evinced no mean portion of mental vigour, and adequate powers of expression. His delivery was bold, firm and decisive, as became the character of the proud and lordly oppressor, whom he on this occasion personated. In the scene, where *Dunkleman* confronts his injured nephew *Albert* he was peculiarly felicitous. We have only to regret, that the part was not more prominent, *Dunkleman* not appearing in the last two acts,

Independent of his claims, as an actor, Mr. Cory possesses no inconsiderable share of musical talent. Of his capability in this line, the public will shortly have an opportunity of judging, Mr. Cory having a *cast* in the new Opera, composing for Mrs. Billington. Mr. Cobbe is understood to be the Author of the Dialogue—and Mr. Mazzinghi furnishes the music.

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\* \* \* An account of the new Musical Entertainment called *The Escapes*, performed for the first time, at Covent Garden Theatre, on Wednesday, the 14th instant, will be given in our next.

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